



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Recommendation to the Commission

Party Submitting Recommendation: Sharon Pierce, Chair of the Kinship Care Sub Committee of the Child Safety and Services Task Force

Date of Submission: 11/25/2019

Type of Action Requested:

Legislation Policy Resolution of Support or Endorsement Public Promotion

Other: Expand a Current Process

Which of the Commission's Strategic Priorities does this Recommendation help advance:

Child Safety and services Juvenile Justice and Cross-system Youth
 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Educational Outcomes

Summary of Recommendation:

The Kinship Caregivers Sub Committee of the Child Safety and Services Task Force recommends that the Indiana form for GUARDIANSHIP be added to the Court Access Website, indianalegalhelp.org, along with understandable instructions.

Background of Recommendation:

What is the need or problem?

Kinship Caregivers are often grandparents or close relatives of the children in their care. Because of this, they are hesitant to move towards Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption of the child(ren) in their care, in hopes that the children's biological parents might be able to, one day, re-assume their parenting role. Yet, the kinship caregivers need legal protection and status to have the right to be a part of the child or children's educational access and rights, as well as medical care.

What is the current response to the problem by the State of Indiana?

Currently, it is difficult for Kinship Caregivers to access legal support and facilitate the Guardianship Process.

What is the recommender proposing, and how will it help solve the problem?

Providing public access and instructions for how to move forward in being recognized as a child's legal guardian will be a huge resource for Kinship Caregivers, and can allow them to at least begin this process, themselves, without incurring the cost of legal counsel.

What data, research or other information did the recommender consult to formulate this proposal?

This was a consistent and frequent recommendation from Kinship Caregivers who have been actively participating in Kinship Caregiver Focus Groups, as a part of an initiative of Casey Family Programs; The Villages of Indiana, an accredited, statewide child and family services nonprofit; and the Indiana Department of Child Services ... all with the goal of providing greater support and resources to our dedicated Kinship Caregivers in Indiana.

If a legislative request, cite the current relevant code and specify what change is being recommended.

Click or tap here to enter text.

If a policy request, cite the current relevant policy and specify what change is being recommended.

Click or tap here to enter text.

If the recommendation involves an endorsement or public promotion of a specific initiative or statement, attach the document of which you are seeking the Commission's support/endorsement/promotion.